

WAIKATO-MANIAPOTO MAORI LAND DISTRICT.

This district, stretching south of Auckland from the Tamaki Isthmus to Taumarunui, encompasses roughly the whole of the Waikato district, the Coromandel and Hauraki areas, and the King-country.

During the year the Waikato-Maniapoto development areas, on which settlers have been established over a period of years, were reclassified and grouped under three blanket or covering schemes, viz. —

- (1) Waikato unit schemes, comprising areas from the City of Auckland southwards to the Punu River and Pirongia, with a determined boundary on the east.
- (2) Hauraki unit scheme, which includes the areas east of the Waikato scheme, principally the districts at Thames, Coromandel, and Te Aroha.
- (3) Maniapoto unit scheme, embracing the King-country district.

Each comprehensive scheme district is further subdivided geographically into lettered series, due regard being paid to such aspects as tribal boundaries, access, block areas, and existing development schemes, and each series becomes more or less a concise locality retaining, where possible, the old scheme designations or known under a local name. Thus many of the old familiar names of unit or settler schemes recorded in previous reports will disappear or become absorbed in the new classification, but reference to these schemes will be made later in this statement to preserve continuity. Land development schemes on which Native farmers have not yet been established, or unsettled portions of other schemes, are not affected by this change, which is confined to areas definitely occupied by approved settlers, who are usually referred to as units. The general effect of this reorganization is systematization of the work in all branches. The settlers or units in any particular locality are recorded together, their accounts are similarly classified, and the improved geographical classification will facilitate administration and supervision. Furthermore, the system is elastic and capable of indefinite expansion, and as new settlers are established they will be placed in their appropriate group.

There are in the South Auckland district 53,845 acres gazetted as being subject to development legislation. To date 24,736 acres have been developed under the aegis of the Department, while a further 18,346 acres are estimated to be suitable for profitable cultivation and settlement. There is ample scope for further land development works in this district for some years to come. At the present time active farming is being pursued by 182 controlled occupiers, representing an increase of 47 settlers on last year's figures.

The general weather conditions throughout South Auckland during the past twelve months have been unsatisfactory, and very dry conditions were experienced during February and March. Owing to the prolonged period without rain, a small decline in butterfat production per cow has been recorded, and this drop is perhaps more serious in the Waikato area, where herds were affected with facial eczema during the previous season. Despite this, however, the district produced 448,410 lb. of butterfat during the season, which represents an increase of 86,799 lb. over last year's figures. Crops for winter feed have suffered, but the dry spell has, however, proved beneficial for burning-off operations and grassing some large areas, and the new pasture will materially increase next year's carrying-capacity on a number of holdings.

Efforts have been made to bring as many milking-sheds as possible up to the standard required by the Department of Agriculture. With extra supervision available it has been possible to give much needed personal instruction to many farmers in the care and management of dairy stock. Settlers have responded to the efforts of the supervisors, and appear to realize more and more that success in dairy-farming can only be achieved by concentrating on cleanliness in and around the milking-shed, regularity in milking and feeding, and the careful handling of their herds. Particular care has also been taken to instruct the settlers in rearing their own heifer calves. In the past, stock replacements have represented a large item, but the settlers, on the whole, are beginning to realize that this unprofitable expenditure can be obviated by rearing their own female dairy stock.

In the Maniapoto district approximately 5,000 acres were cleared of bush, scrub, and second growth, while almost 3,000 acres were put down in grass and other cultivations during the year. The importance of this work has been reflected in increased wool returns, the production for the year being 382 bales, representing an increase of 176 bales on last season's clip. The unqualified success of experiments in treating pastures with cobalt and superphosphate will give a great impetus to the use of this class of fertilizer on areas affected by bush sickness and where it is found that stock suffer from malnutrition.

The provision of shelter trees on farms is of paramount importance and is receiving considerable attention. On scheme lands during the year nearly 250,000 trees have been planted, including 87,000 barberry plants for hedges.

Two nominations were received for the Ahuwhenua Trophy competition, and although the entrants were not successful in winning the cup one of the competitors was awarded fourth place, and the judge commented very favourably on their endeavours.

Grants from the Employment Promotion Fund were utilized in subsidizing capital labour costs. The extent of the work carried out by this means may be appreciated from the tables included in this report, and it is believed that full value has been obtained for the money expended.

A problem of the supervisors has been the inability to obtain, at a reasonable cost, a sufficient quantity of fencing-posts to keep pace with development. To relieve the shortage, concrete posts have been successfully manufactured in four localities at a reasonable cost. Future supplies of fencing-material are now assured, as the Department has secured cutting rights over an area of red birch from which it is estimated 200,000 posts can be extracted. Accommodation for workmen has been erected on the property, and as soon as the necessary tram-line has been laid it is intended to employ twelve splitters to cope with requirements.